

March 14, 2013

To: Public Safety Committee

Good morning and thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Diane Gilbert. I am a resident of the State of Connecticut. I am submitting testimony today as a citizen, a mother, and a registered nurse who has worked in the communities of this state for over thirty years. I have seen the full effects of deinstitutionalization first hand with regard to the number of mental health patients in the community. As a result of the closing and/or downsizing of many of our psychiatric hospitals starting in the 1970s and 80s we now have a second generation of families living in the community with psychiatric illness. Over the next five years these numbers will increase due to the expansion of the Money Follows the Person program in this state. It is estimated that over the next five years the state will transition 9,000 more people out of institutions and into the community. A large percentage of them will be psychiatric patients. Some of them will remain stable in the community and some of them will not. Community resources for mental health patients is already strained. As a result of these policy changes over the past thirty years the makeup of our communities has changed. We will never be able to identify all individuals with propensity towards violence. HIPAA law will continue to make it difficult to identify unstable individuals residing outside of facilities. It is the state's *duty* to keep the public safe. Limiting public access to weapons, especially those with the capacity to kill large numbers of people is the sensible approach towards the public's safety. I am asking that your committee support the ban on military style assault weapons and high capacity cartridges as well as universal background checks and expanding safe storage laws. The general public now includes the mental ill. Fewer guns in the community equals decreased risk of violence and increased safety for the public. It is my sincere hope that this committee will recommend and take the right action.

Thank You,

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